

1 COMMISSIONER MOORE: Now we'll hear from Ms. Rachel
2 Caine, who is the Program Director of the Salvation Army and
3 Domestic Violence Shelter in Pascagoula.

4 MS. CAINE: Good morning. I am Rachel Caine, and I
5 appreciate the opportunity to share with you my experience and
6 knowledge from my work as a social worker and investigator of
7 child abuse and neglect and also as a domestic abuse intervention
8 worker with the domestic violence shelter of these last two
9 years.

10 While attending the University of Alabama, I read
11 about a study performed by a lab experimenter about the influence
12 of positive reinforcement on mice behavior. This experiment left
13 a lasting impression on me because of the outcome of the study.
14 I felt like it was very relevant to what I have seen with
15 families and the impact of gambling on the family.

16 Mice were chosen as the subjects because, as you'll
17 see, it would have been unethical to perform it on human
18 subjects. In the experiment, the mice were awarded with food
19 pellets after they performed a specific task.

20 Initially, the mice were required to tap on a handle
21 in order to get the reward. This continued until they learned
22 that whenever a tap was made the food pellet would be dropped.

23 Next, the mice were given a reward only after they
24 tapped the handle a specific number of times. While tapping the
25 handle once did not produce the same reward, they still continued
26 to tap the handle until the reward was provided. They soon
27 mastered this and began to tap the levers just enough times to
28 get the reward that they wanted.

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1 Next, the food pellets were provided on a random
2 basis from the experimenter, depending on just whenever they
3 wanted to provide it, once an hour. The mice did not receive the
4 reward again as they had before but they still continued to tap
5 the lever.

6 Finally, food pellets were withheld altogether from
7 the mice. No matter how many times or how long the mice tapped
8 the handle, no food pellet was given. Nevertheless, this did not
9 deter the mice. They still continued to tap the handle until
10 they died from physical exertion.

11 What does this study have to do with the impact of
12 gambling on the family? Well, from my experience in working with
13 families over the last six years, working with child abuse,
14 neglect and domestic abuse, I have seen that there are individual
15 family members who are willing to exhaust everything -- their
16 entire assets, their entire livelihood -- for that next moment of
17 approval and a reward.

18 It is understood that when someone hits the jackpot
19 the lights flash, the bells ring and hundreds of coin fall in a
20 thunderous clanging noise in order to signify the large reward
21 someone just received.

22 It would be so much simpler, of course, to drop \$100
23 bills. However, this would diminish the effectiveness of the
24 reward. After all, a loud boisterous display brings the winner
25 into the center of everyone's attention. This strongly
26 encourages the winner to continue to gamble and reminds those
27 around him or her that if they will continue, they will also reap
28 the same reward.

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1 Well, I propose to you that this is just another rat
2 trap scheme in the gambling industry. While helping families in
3 crisis, I have not seen one instance where gambling affected the
4 family in a positive manner. Instead, I have observed over and
5 over again the serious negative consequences of gambling on
6 families, specifically the disintegration of a stable family
7 unit.

8 I do not have any studies which cite the negative
9 consequences of gambling but I have seen firsthand the negative
10 ripple effect that occurs when a single family member becomes
11 addicted to gambling.

12 In every human being, there is a need for approval
13 and acceptance. While some of us have a stronger need for
14 acceptance than others, it's a universal force within mankind.
15 This is why I believe that anyone, given the right circumstances,
16 can form the habit and become addicted to gambling.

17 I do not believe that, as some propose, that only a
18 small percentage become addicted of those that gamble regularly.
19 Instead, I believe that the more they gamble and the more
20 regular, that it becomes a habit and there's more of a tendency
21 to become addicted.

22 Sadly, these individuals behave in a manner very
23 similar to the study that we saw that I discussed. Gradually,
24 they are trained to be willing to exhaust all their livelihood.
25 There are many reports on how the gaming industry is good for the
26 economy.

27 However, from my point of view and what I have seen,
28 I simply do not see this. What I do see is an enormous amount of

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1 money being spent on combatting the social results and the
2 adverse effects of this gambling.

3 The domestic violence shelter has a primary service
4 area of six counties. One of those counties is Harrison County.
5 We know that the bulk of the gaming industry is in Harrison
6 County. Because of the introduction of several casinos in the
7 area, a substantial increase in population has occurred.

8 Of course, this does have positive effects on the
9 economy. However, it has also contributed, we believe, to a 300
10 percent increase alone at our shelter in the number of requests
11 from Harrison County residents for domestic abuse intervention.

12 Population data from the 1990 census and the Harrison
13 County Chamber of Commerce reflect that from 1990 to 1996 the
14 population growth in Harrison County averaged 12,140 a year. As
15 the population of Harrison County increases, social pressures
16 become greater.

17 Housing -- property taxes have increased; housing is
18 not as available. Employment has increased. However, many
19 casino employees I have noted are from outside of Mississippi. A
20 large number are immigrants from other countries.

21 We have seen that these individuals from our
22 experience, because they have very little family support when
23 crises arise -- they don't have family members in the
24 area -- they're -- call us and they need a lot of substantial
25 assistance. We believe that this has contributed to that
26 substantial increase in the crisis calls that we have received
27 from Harrison County.

28 Again, while population increase and -- has -- in the
29 gambling industry has resulted in more revenues for the Gulf

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1 Coast, I do believe in the long term that we are spending more
2 money just combatting the negative effects.

3 We, at the domestic violence shelter alone, spend an average of
4 \$284,000 a year and this grows every year due to the demand of
5 requests that we've seen.

6 While not every victim served by our shelter has been
7 hurt because of gambling, a substantial number of women reported
8 that gambling contributed to the abuse. Sadly, the stories of
9 these families represent a growing trend throughout Mississippi
10 and also the neighboring states which includes Louisiana, Florida
11 and Alabama.

12 I worked as an investigator of child abuse and
13 neglect in Alabama and I saw firsthand some of the neglect cases
14 that I went out to visit where the families, when we looked at
15 their budget, most of the money was being spent in gambling and
16 they weren't -- there was no money to provide for proper clothing
17 for the weather and so forth.

18 The impact of gambling on these families is resulting
19 in a powerful voice of opposition to the gaming industry. In
20 time, I believe the true impact of gambling on American society
21 will be revealed when this ripple effect sweeps across our
22 country.

23 At this time, I am going to share a few stories that
24 we have seen from the domestic violence shelter. The first
25 involves a mother of four children. She came into the shelter
26 after her husband seriously physically abused her. He justified
27 his abuse toward her by stating that she was at fault because she
28 gambled their money.

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1 He told this to their children. Their son was very
2 angry for causing -- at his mother for causing his father to
3 abuse her. He was also angry that she left the younger siblings
4 for days at a time with a 14-year old just to -- while she was
5 gambling.

6 She admitted to writing bad checks to as much as 1600
7 to support her gambling addiction. She and her husband
8 subsequently got a divorce and she left the state with her
9 children.

10 Another sad story involves a middle-aged woman who
11 was married to a man addicted to gambling. He owned a business,
12 a successful business, but he borrowed a large sum of money
13 against this business to gamble. Unfortunately, he lost the
14 gamble and the casino took over the business.

15 He charged cash advances to six major credit cards.
16 He maxed all the credit cards out. When he came home from
17 gambling, he would beat her. He also had a yard sale while she
18 was in the shelter where he sold all their possessions just to be
19 able to continue gambling.

20 Unfortunately, he also had a severe alcohol problem.
21 The doctors told him that if he -- just one drink could kill him
22 because his lungs were that diseased. However, when he gambled
23 he was provided with free alcohol beverages. Is this a rat trap?

24 Another woman who sought protection from the domestic
25 violence shelter had forged her husband's name on several checks
26 to support her habit. Her husband was working offshore and part
27 of his paycheck came directly to her.

28 When her husband found out that she was gambling the
29 money away instead of providing for her two small children, he

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1 abused her and she and her children were forced to leave the
2 home. She arrived at our doorstep one evening just completely
3 out of the blue. She didn't even have money to pay for the cab.
4 Does this sound like a rat trap?

5 Another story comes from an employee of the Salvation
6 Army. She lived across from a family who was evicted from their
7 home because of the father's addiction. There were four children
8 in this family. The mother was a hard worker; the father stayed
9 home.

10 He sold everything in the home to support his habit.
11 He took the money that was supposed to be provided for rent and
12 spent it at the casinos. His addiction became so severe that he
13 was caught burglarizing a neighbor's home. He was arrested and
14 the mother and small children left the area. Is this a rat trap?

15 The next story came from an employee of the domestic
16 violence shelter. She witnessed a beautiful young girl dressed
17 in a formal gown gambling at one of the casinos. This young girl
18 wore a very elegant outfit and was playing two slot machines at a
19 time.

20 The witness noticed a puddle form at the bottom of
21 this young lady's feet. An agent's employee of the casinos
22 explained that some people are so concerned about losing their
23 lucky slot machine that they won't even take time to go to the
24 rest room. It was explained that this particular situation was
25 not unusual. Does this sound like a rat trap?

26 Maybe individuals justify going to the casinos by
27 stating that they just want to be entertained or that they are
28 going to receive the great food. It's interesting that the
29 casinos are structured so that if anyone does go to the theater

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1 or go to the buffet they must pass by the gambling machines
2 first. Is this a rat trap?

3 Throughout the Gulf Coast, there are a growing number
4 of businesses that are being lost because of -- to the gaming
5 industry. Many of these businesses are family owned and when
6 they are lost a family's entire livelihood is wiped out, just
7 like that.

8 In addition, there are a growing number of
9 individuals who are placing second and third mortgages on their
10 homes just to pay off their gambling debts. Ladies and
11 gentlemen, commissioners, this is a rat trap.

12 In conclusion, I want to pose a very important
13 question for those who believe that the gaming industry is good
14 for our economy and good for Mississippi, how many families and
15 how many lives need to be destroyed through the addiction of
16 gambling before we wake up and realize that this is a rat trap?

17 Before I conclude, I just want to ask one question as
18 well. Is it really worth it? Thank you.

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